

**Duluth American Indian Commission Meeting  
Monday, April 19, 2010 - 5:00 pm  
Mayor's Reception Room  
Room 405, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor City Hall**

**Present:** Donna Ennis, Warner Wirta, Joy Dorscher, Donna Bluebird, Toni Dickenson, Ron Hagland (to be sworn in the future)

**Excused Absence:** Bea Kitto, Ricky Defoe, Ron Boshey, Donovan Strong

**Unexcused Absence:** Renee Van Nett

**CALL TO ORDER, APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND INTRODUCTIONS:**

Donna Ennis called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

**Motion by Warner Wirta, seconded by Toni Dickenson, to approve the Agenda. The motion was unanimously approved.**

Introductions of commission and community members.

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE MARCH, 15, 2010 MEETING:**

**Motion by Joy Dorscher, seconded by Donna Bluebird, to approve the minutes of the March 15, 2010 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.**

**COMMUNITY PUBLIC FORUM / OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:**

Nicholas Martin requested an opportunity to talk to Duluth Police Department about repeated altercations over the last 6 months. He feels that police department, which continues even until last week, is harassing him. Nicholas is licensed and insured since 2008. He has a 1990 Cadillac, his mother maintains the insurance; he is a student and has a child. He does have a cracked windshield, which would be too expensive to fix, but he has been pulled over numerous times, but never gotten a ticket and is asked to get identifications from everyone in the car, when he questions the officers if that is appropriate, they respond rudely and shut him down. He has not been involved in illegal activity except there was one time when there was a woman with a warrant out on her. She was removed from the car. Last month while driving a friend's vehicle, the police stopped him and were rude and demanding. He was stopped after leaving a home where they had warrant, they found marijuana on one of the passengers and he got a ticket for that. He also had a small amount of marijuana and was ticketed. The police continued to be rude and demanding. He is embarrassed that he is unable to drive anywhere. He feels that the police should be happy to have a young person being responsible. Last week he got a ticket for parking facing the wrong way on the street. Others on the block also parked in the other direction.

Warner Wirta stated that his niece and nephew have had similar experiences by the Cloquet police. The police civilian review board may bring appropriate attention to this

kind of police behavior. "This is invasion of privacy." He suggested that police have to go to college to learn about harassment on the FDL reservation TCC.

Ron Hagland inquired about Nicholas' history with police. (There was no history.) He said that he has heard of reports about young Indian people who get singled out for very little reason, who get stopped and questioned repeatedly.

Donna Bluebird relayed that her interactions with police have been positive so she couldn't speak to that, maybe someone needs to get a hold of the police to get in touch with them and talk about the situation.

Donna Ennis said we do have the police chief and the liaison person later in the agenda. We will get your contact information and forward it to Donovan Strong to get some answers for Nicholas.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

**AICHO's Gimaajii** - Sherry Sanchez Tibbetts presented a written update on the American Indian Center and 29 supportive housing units. She stated that they are on the verge of closing for the historic tax credit. They will close with MHFA in May, and real construction starting in June. There is some lead and asbestos work being done. There is funding from Duluth HRA to get the lead out. This month the Minnesota legislature passed an historic tax credit, and we should be one of the first to take advantage of that, but that would not slow us up.

**Juvenile Justice Reform Update** - Both Melanie Ford and Donovan Strong are in St. Paul so are unable to give update. In May 11-14 there is a delegation to Santa Cruise to look at a site out there to look at a juvenile justice. Both Donna Ennis and Ricky Defoe will participate in this travel.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Crime** - Chief Gordon Ramsey is here to introduce Leigh Wright, who will act as the liaison with DAIC and will address questions or concerns that we have. There was a citizen 1-2 months ago and there was a stabbing and the county attorney's office would not charge. Chief Ramsey met with Ricky DeFoe and Ron Boshey and went over the report. Although the report to the DAIC was that there were no interviews done witnesses were interviewed, but there were many discrepancies between the victim and the police report. There were much overtime approved for detectives etc. to measure the scene, take reports. Ricky DeFoe now has the report, this is open to the public. It is important to build trust with commission members and share as much information as possible. Ron Boshey has been the liaison. There as a homicide of a Native man last summer, the family was more at ease with Ron there. The police appreciate that Renee Van Nett was a liaison was there as well. The department has hired 10 police officers, two are Native American and continue to actively recruit. Also hired parking meter monitor to bring onto the force in the future.

Related to Nick's complaint; there have been cameras in the primary squads, there are about 20+ with 10 coming. This will help with complaints like those we heard tonight so

we can go back and address the issues. Nick's complaint was more age or racial. Chief Ramsey relays that he has known Freddy (here with Nick) for many years. So he can come with Nick if he would like. Chief Ramsey related that the police department did an audit as a response to Native American victims of sexual assault, they are the least prosecuted, (PAVSA) rode with officers, reviewed books, dissected everything the police did and gave them suggestions. That is a public book that Chief Ramsey will make sure is available to the DAIC. Not all was good about the police report but we want to improve and so that was worthwhile.

Dr. Bob Powless and Ron Boshey have come in and talked about Native customers, to keep the officers from getting into trouble with Native community, such as witting with a body etc. so that we don't offend.

Lt. Leigh Wright would like to share a bit about herself. She has been with department for 22 years, with a number of years on patrol in the Lincoln Park area. Then she worked in sex crimes, child abuse and neglect and was a part of PAVSA board, then a sergeant on patrol. She ran violent crimes unit and now works nights. If she doesn't have an answer she will get it and looks forward to working with the commission

Ron Hagland asked the Chief about the total number of Native Americans on the force. The two new hires put the numbers at 6 of 148. In the last three years the police force has doubled the number of people of color and is working toward increasing the numbers with each hire. Fond du Lac (FDL) doesn't have internships right now; sometimes the Duluth police department looks to students to help a special project but not necessarily internships. They may not be doing it right now. FDL has a great program as it is free to young Native Americans in law enforcement. It is free tuition. I wish students to go in that as it is a great resource.

Toni Dickenson asked about Nick's rights regarding being pulled over, can they ask everyone for identification? Being near or at a house with a warrant, they would identify all people in the car. She questions how it makes a young person feel toward the police, when they are treated in this way. Police Weill looks at videos with family and is transparent. They had been at the table at the citizens review board, and the Aztec circle and want to work with the community.

Warner what is set up in the department to address profiling, is there a training program of this nature? Chief Ramsey states that besides the state laws, which makes it illegal to have racial profiling they are also trained in that way. The cameras will reinforce this training. Warner stated that he is worried about racial profiling because community people get sickening, because Cloquet police has consistently stopped grandson even though you don't have anything to do with that. Niece is staying in Duluth and has been stopped several times. Doesn't sit well with him. Have the police investigated the murders of the American Indian Albert Morrison? He was killed for 60 cents. It was in the Duluth paper not too long ago. What have the police done to investigate this (July 22, 2009). Albert George Morrison found dead last week – this is the one that Ron Boshey was involved with and the police got a letter from the family as a thank you. It was solved in 48 hours; the family was appreciative of having Ron there. But some

cases do go on for a long time and leaves a bad taste for the Indian community. What about past cases. Chief said that in the last four years we have solved every murder He realizes that there are others that we continue to work on.

Ron Hagland started by saying son is a police officer in Oakdale, did not want him to be a policeman, but he was committed to law enforcement, and to be honest sometimes I get scared (swing shift and weekends because that is where the action is). He gives Ron insight into the police world, a brotherhood, and talks about who they will defend one another. Even if these things are addressed and solved on your watch it is unfortunate but good to deal with complaints. I have not heard a community service approach where Indians deserve protection, and consumers. This young man who died in the alley, it was tragic. As it is now the police in communities get to know the people and they continue to have the community based system. The biggest problem is the staffing, there could be ride along or to have a police academy to see how things work, see how to handle homicide, property crimes, budget and we would be warmly welcomed. Warner's final question, has anything developed out of the police review board? Donna is on the board as well as Ricky DeFoe are on the task force. Eileen Luna is doing needs assessment and the board will be close to coming to fruition. From her report the review board will be developed.

Donna Bluebird stated that there were murders of Natives in South Dakota and they took up walkie-talkies and helped patrol with police.

Mike Flaherty wanted to share his interactions with Lt. Leigh Wright. He felt that he had been targeted at a media event that he attended as a blogger. It was Lt. Wright who wanted him to leave. He felt that he had been targeted because he is often not supportive of the police department. Chief Ramsey stated it was a misunderstanding and has been improved upon at this point.

Gangs-consider having a Native American on gang task force and would consider learning more about having a volunteer for the task force, this came from Mike Herrera.

**Rental Property** - Michael DeFoe-Rental issue with Landlord. Community organizer Allen Richardson said to give him a card to help him with it.

**Rental Property Mangers and/or Spirit Mountain Guests** - Willard Munger-good friend of Warner's here more as citizen and we should have representations from the Indian community. There are two openings now and would like to see if we can get someone on the board. Working with the mayor's office and the city councilors. It is important because many feel it is a sacred area to the past history of the area and as a business owner the American Indian community has had little input into the regional history and Spirit Mountain would be natural area/logical area to set aside some space for a heritage center or cultural center, etc. from the area. One area is where they have the cross country ski trails and the chalet for the skiing; had been encouraged to do more in the cross country ski area, but not much money in that. An American Indian cultural center could make money for the American Indian community and Spirit Mountain, both to sell goods and study the history of the area. It is up to us to put forth

a name for the board. Warner said we need to get a person on the Spirit Mountain Authority board. They could work from the American Indian community and bring information from the American Indian community and is prepared to contribute but hard to do if shut out. That is why there needs to be someone on the board, they could open all of information, and could flow back and forth

Ron Hagland stated that the Cheyenne have stories of their white buffalo coming up from the lake to give them instructions. Would be appropriate for something like that. Warner would like to influence the board into this type of reasoning so an American Indian can get on the Spirit Mountain authority board. The people on the board are business owners and may not be interested in American Indian views, more so of profit. An American Indian on the board could bring tourist dollars to Duluth all year round. John Herrera stated that the elder circle is a mixture started an all nations council with land from mining company to start and interpretation center, the council is still there

Warner Wirta stated that there are two openings on the Spirit Mountain Authority Board and Ricky DeFoe is willing to serve on the board.

Ron Hagland sang a song in honor of Warner Wirta's final day on the DAIC

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS, UPCOMING EVENTS AND COMMENTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS:**

##### **ADJOURNMENT:**

**Motion by Joy Dorscher, seconded by Toni Dickenson, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting was adjourned at 6:39 pm.**